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No. 179

The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM

April 7th, 1943.

DEAR MEMBER,

New restrictions on the use of paper, affecting magazines and news-bulletins started since the war, have compelled us to make drastic changes in the Christian News-Letter. While these changes may in some ways make it more difficult to do what we set out to do, they provide compensation in other directions and need in no way defeat our purpose. That purpose, as you know, was to create a link between those in the Churches and outside who are seeking to understand the events of the war in their bearing on the spiritual life of the nation and of mankind, and to enable us to think together about the great issues of our time and their challenge to Christian faith.

The News-Letter will in future be published fortnightly instead of weekly. The change to some of you at least will not be unwelcome. From the beginning we have had numerous letters from our members telling us that they have not the time properly to digest one News-Letter before the next arrives. Fortnightly publication will also make it possible for the editors to put more work into each number. As you doubtless all realize, what takes time is not the actual writing of the letter but the preliminary investigation of the subject. We try before writing about a question to take the best advice that we can. The pressure of a weekly News-Letter has kept us in the past from achieving this aim as fully as we desired. With more time at our disposal we hope to give you better quality than before.

We have also had to change our format. Changes of this kind are disappointing at first, but one gets used quickly to the new form.

We propose to let you have each fortnight in the new style a Letter and Supplement, each of four pages, and not infrequently to double the length of the Letter or of the Supplement. By using smaller type we hope to give you under this arrangement at least five-sixths as much matter in the year as you have been getting in the past.

THE AMERICAN CHURCHES AND THE PEACE

The Supplement this week contains the full text of the statement on "A Just and Durable Peace," which has been sent by the Federal Council of Churches in America to over 50,000 Christian ministers in that country. For the following reasons the document is significant.

(1) It is an expression of the Christian mind of America on the issues of post-war policy, based on the report of a representative Commission

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that has been at work for two years, and endorsed by representatives of all the Protestant Churches in the United States.

(2) In its preparation the American Churches have made the fullest use of the practical experience of laymen conversant with public affairs. The Chairman of the Commission was Mr. John Foster Dulles, who was counsel to the American delegation at the Peace Conference after the last war. He has represented America on a number of commissions concerned with reparations and European economic problems. He thus has wide international connections and friendships. He visited this country a few months ago and was in touch with many sections of British opinion. While the document is written from the American standpoint, it has been prepared in the light of many consultations with representatives of the United Nations. We may be certain that it is based on a real knowledge of the actual international situation as it is seen by those who have to deal with it.

(3) Steps are being taken to press the proposals on the Congress and Executive of the United States with a view to their becoming part of the national policy.

(4) Because it possesses this character, the document, rightly used, may contribute in valuable ways to the growth of a common Christian mind about the relation of Christianity to public affairs. This is a point which I wish strongly to emphasize. An important question of method is involved which has a bearing on our approach to other subjects besides the international future.

One of the greatest difficulties in arriving at a common Christian mind, and consequently in combining in effective Christian action, is the vastness, complexity and many-sidedness of modern problems. About the issues involved in the making of peace, for example, there are literally hundreds of things to be said that are both true and, in their place, important. Books and articles pour from the press in a ceaseless flow, each having its individual approach to the subject, each concentrating on certain factors and ignoring others. Various groups prepare and issue joint statements, but they are too numerous for all to receive attention, and none has sufficient weight and authority to force its way into the centre of discussion.

How are we to escape from this paralyzing multiplicity and confusion, which inhibit action? We need to discover a new technique. If we are to talk and think *together* there must be some single set of propositions on which to focus discussion. The difficulty is to know which to choose out of the host of competing formulations. Some favour this, some that, and some another. None has a markedly superior status to the rest, and so we go on trying to make up our minds what we propose to discuss and never reach the point of effective common discussion, still less of making real decisions.

In regard to the subject with which it deals the American statement offers a way out, if we choose to take it. It is our unusual good fortune to have in it a statement of Christian aims that is lifted out of the jostling crowd—first, by the amount, thoroughness and competence of the work that has been put into it; and, secondly, by the support given to it by a very large body of representative Christian opinion. These

two things are no guarantee that the proposals are right; but they are strong reasons for accepting the statement as the starting-point of further discussion. If we adopt it as a common basis, we shall be in the happy position of talking to one another about the same things and not about a host of different things that can never be brought into the same focus.

The statement needs to be examined critically from two major points of view. First, does it proceed from a right understanding of Christianity? Are its presuppositions the true Christian presuppositions? Secondly, does it envisage and interpret rightly the realities of the international situation? In both these fields, searching questions need to be asked. We may decide in the end to reject the propositions in whole or in part. Or we may decide that they need amendment or amplification. We shall certainly want to bring to them such correction as is needed when the questions are viewed from the angle of other countries than America. But if we discipline ourselves to concentrate attention on these propositions until we reach the point of wholeheartedly accepting them, or decisively rejecting them, or altering them in the ways that we judge to be necessary, we shall by this means both attain greater clarity in our own thinking and be much farther along the road towards a common Christian mind than if we go on moving in circles by constantly changing the subject of discussion.

So far as the Christian News-Letter is concerned, discussions of international relations will in the future be related, directly or indirectly, to the propositions set forth in this document. We shall at least keep them steadily in our eye. They will remain our point of orientation until we find a better.

THE BIG BEN SILENT MINUTE

The significance of simple and familiar things easily eludes us. How many of us, for example, are alive to the possibilities of the announcement which for a year and a half has appeared daily in broadcasting programmes in some of our newspapers: "9. Big Ben; Minute for Reflection; News"? The observance has become world-wide; large numbers at that moment lift up in unison their hearts to God.[1] The sound of the chimes always stirs in me a sense of powerful forces, actual and potential, working silently against the evil and destruction that are abroad in the world.

What the observance amounts to depends, of course, to a large extent on the use we choose to make of it. It may be only a trivial act or transient emotion; or again, because it is a call to God, it may have tremendous import.

The practice of family prayers and of grace before meals, once common in British homes, has disappeared from all but a few. In the observance of the Silent Minute there is being restored to the lives of many the habit of a daily act of recollection in which thoughts are turned to God. This redirection of life may mean a great deal and may lead on to much more.

[1] Literature may be obtained from the Big Ben Silent Minute Observance, 2 and 3 Duke Street, St. James's, London, S.W. 1. The enclosure of stamps to cover cost of postage and printing will be appreciated.

The forms in which Christian faith expresses itself change from age to age. The re-emergence in the Christian world of a practice recalling the Angelus brings with it new opportunities of religious education. The call is a public call, and to respond to it is to share in a public act ; such a public acknowledgement of man's dependence on God can be effective, not only in the conscious acts of those who participate in it, but also through the power of suggestion. At the same time it presents an opportunity of interpreting by teaching and literature the meaning of the observance and showing that the brief act of recollection has significance in proportion as it both springs out of, and deepens our dedication to, a whole life of faith and obedience.

We join in the observance knowing that many in different lands are offering their prayers in unison with us ; the invention of broadcasting gives us an opportunity of recollecting and affirming daily our membership in the universal Church.

We were reminded in a recent Supplement that Christian prayer always takes place within the Church ; that is to say, it has its roots not in our demands on God, but in His revelation of Himself in Christ, and our approach to Him is never as individuals, but always as members of the one Body. This does not, however, in the least diminish the importance of the fact that very many who have been alienated from institutional religion are through the observance of the Silent Minute finding their way back to God. Christianity appeared in a world in which belief in a supernatural world was practically universal. To-day the mind of multitudes has become completely secularized ; their horizon is bounded by the things that are seen. A change in human consciousness in the direction of a recovery of a sense of the reality of the unseen world would be an event of no small significance.

The months ahead will be full of bloody battles. The lives of many will be lacerated by personal loss. Beneath our national unity in face of the war there exist deep tensions which may, when it is over, break into acute conflict. In Europe we shall be confronted with disease, famine, physical infirmity, moral and spiritual disintegration on a scale never known before. Vast and formidable obstacles stand in the way of a genuine understanding between the leading Powers. In India we are facing an impasse. What hope is there that mankind can meet the tremendous demands that will be made on men's courage, faith, perseverance and understanding unless there is a far-reaching return to God, the Source and End of man's existence ?

Yours sincerely,

J. H. Oldham

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THE CHRISTIAN NEWS-LETTER

Supplement to No. 179

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A JUST AND DURABLE PEACE

Report of a Commission of the Federal Council of Churches in America

FOREWORD BY THE CHAIRMAN

The American people again find themselves in an era of critical decision. It must now be determined, this time in terms that will be understood all over the world, whether men are capable of establishing good government from reflection and choice or whether they will continue to be buffeted about by force and by accident. Now, as before, it is reserved for the people of this country to play a decisive rôle. Now more than ever a wrong choice of the part we shall act will involve us in the general misfortune of mankind.

In anticipation of this critical period the Federal Council of Churches over two years ago set up this commission to study the bases of a just and durable peace. We have diligently pursued that study. We have seen and said that the ills which afflict our society are fundamentally due to our not conforming with the moral order, the laws of which are as imperative and as inexorable as are those that order our physical world. The indifference to and violation of these moral laws always bring such sickness and suffering as to-day afflict mankind.

We have in a statement of guiding principles set down certain principles of that moral order as being particularly relevant to our times and to our national responsibility and opportunity. That statement has been officially endorsed by the Federal Council of Churches, and the widespread response which it has evoked from Christian people makes it clear that they predominantly hold the beliefs therein set forth.

Many now ask: what shall we do?

The first and paramount task of Christian churches remains that of bringing more persons to subject their lives to the will of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. For us He is the source of the moral law of which we speak. He is the source of the moral judgments on issues of this war about which the Federal Council of Churches has also spoken. Only if the Christian churches of this land build a spiritual foundation that is broad and deep will this nation pursue righteous policies. Only if the spiritual revelation will strike from our eyes the scales of hatred, hypocrisy, intolerance and greed will we be competent to cope with the immensely difficult problems that confront us.

But there is the secondary task to which our commission can now properly address itself. That is to point out that the guiding principles which we have proclaimed compel certain broad political conclusions. We do that now because the course of events is such that the time for action is at hand.

Military peril has dramatized for all to see the need for international co-operation. But as military victory becomes more certain and draws nearer that need will be less obvious. As we come to grips with the appalling moral, social and material aftermaths of the Axis rule transitory issues will arise to perplex and divide the United

Nations. These may loom large and obscure the fundamentals, and will incline us to relapse into reliance only upon our own strength. Thus if our nation does not make the right choice soon it may never be made in our time.

We have accordingly now formulated and we present herewith a statement of the political propositions that flow from moral principles we have heretofore enunciated. We also append a brief commentary upon these propositions.

We have stated our propositions in simple and in minimum terms. We recognize that, as so stated, there is much latitude as to their form and detailed content and as to the timing of their full realization. These matters are important and their determination will involve much honest differences of opinion which ultimately must be reconciled. But the propositions as stated by us serve to force the initial and vital decision or direction by which this nation will move. They force that decision in relation to the six major areas towards and within which the factual interdependence of the world has become such as to require political mechanism for co-operative action. If the six propositions we enunciate become the official programme of this nation we will be committed to move by definite steps to bring ourselves into ordered relationship with others. Only if nations join to do this can we escape the chaos and recurrent war. Only if the United States assumes the leadership can it be done now. For we more than any other nation have the capacity to influence decisively the shaping of world events. If the future is to be other than a repetition of the past the United States must accept responsibility for constructive action commensurate with its power and opportunity. And so we present our statement of political propositions and we ask the people of this nation:

To study, to understand and to accept these propositions and their implications;

To seek that such propositions shall be adopted by our Congress and Executive as the official policy of our government;

To seek through the proper channels the acceptance by other nations of these propositions, towards the end that an immediate start be made to realize them.

The many who believe the things we believe and who desire as citizens to do something about it have here a field for action.

THE STATEMENT

1. *The peace must provide the political framework for continuing collaboration of the United Nations and in due course of neutral and enemy nations.*

Comment.—Interdependence of the world is strikingly proved by events that led up to this war. That interdependence calls for permanent political collaboration. Such collaboration should as quickly as possible be universal. But practically the initial nucleus is the United Nations who have already been forced by events to collaborate.

The degree of collaboration can properly be related to the degree of interdependence, and thus any universal scheme may contain within its framework the provision for regional collaboration. Europe particularly illustrates the need for regional collaboration. To continue there the unco-ordinated independence of some twenty-five sovereign states will assure for the future that, as in the past, war will be a frequently recurrent event.

2. *The peace must make provision for bringing within the scope of international agreement those economic and financial acts of national governments which have widespread international repercussions.*

Comment.—Science has made it possible for the world to sustain a far greater population than was formerly the case and to attain for that population a higher standard of living. But this involves a large degree of transportation and interchange between one nation and another. Thus all people are subject to grave risks so long as any single government may by unilateral action disrupt the flow of world trade. This is a form of anarchy that creates widespread insecurity and breeds disorder. It prompts nations to seek self-sufficiency for themselves at the expense of others.

We do not here envisage as presently practical a condition of "free trade." But the world does require that areas of economic independence be dealt with in the interest of all concerned and that there be an international organization to promote this end.

3. *The peace must make provision for the organization to adapt by treaty the structure of the world to the changing underlying conditions.*

Comment.—The world is a living and therefore a changing organism. Change is one thing that is inevitable. As the world is now organized a fixed status is prescribed by treaties, and unless all parties agree that status cannot be changed except by force or threat of force. A change effected under the threat of force seldom is productive of peace because a change under such circumstances seems to reward and thus encourage violent and lawless elements. But on the other hand, nations like individuals seldom freely abandon their acquired legal rights. We must, therefore, have an organization to promote such changes in the treaty structure of the world as may be needed to keep that structure responsible toward the changes underlying future conditions. Without this no conditions of peace, however just and fair initially, will permanently assure peace.

4. *The peace must proclaim the goal of autonomy for subject people and it must establish international organization to assure and to supervize realization of that end.*

Comment.—There is a ferment between many people who are now subject to alien rule. That will make durable peace unattainable unless such peoples are satisfied that they can achieve self-rule without passive or active resistance to the now constituted authorities. We realize that autonomy in certain cases is not now desired and in other cases is presently impractical. But judgments as to this tend to be warped and certainly are suspect when made by the governing power itself. There must be international agencies which embrace persons free from self-interest which comes from identification with a particular governing power, and which are charged with the duty to see that pledges of ultimate autonomy are honoured and that in the meanwhile there is no exploitation for alien ends. Self-rule when achieved would, of course, be subject to the limitations which follow from the other propositions here stated.

5. *The peace must establish procedures for controlling military establishments everywhere.*

Comment.—It is assumed that those nations with which we are at war will be effectively disarmed. But that alone will not suffice. Military establishments everywhere should be brought under some form of international control. This has two aspects : one negative and the other positive.

The negative purpose is to bring to an end the present system which permits nations generally to create unlimited armament for use for purely national ends. Continuation of that system would ultimately undermine the international organs we contemplate. It would either paralyze their action or lead to action preferential to the nations possessed of great military power. There should nowhere be vast military establishments which have no valid reason for existence except to enable their possessors to be a law unto themselves.

The positive purpose of control is to bring such military establishments as remain into the affirmative service of international order. International agencies such as those we contemplate will primarily need to depend upon the moral support of the great body of mankind. That is their only reliable source of permanent power, and unless they can command such moral backing they are not entitled to other forms of power. But any society will produce minority elements who are not subject to moral suasion and who, if they feel able, may defy the general interest to advance their own. Therefore, the economic and military power of the world community should be subject to mobilization to support international agencies which are designed to and do in fact serve the general welfare.

6. *The peace must establish in principle and seek to achieve in practice the right of individuals everywhere to religious and intellectual liberty.*

Comment.—Wars are not due only to economic causes. They have their origin also in false ideologies and ignorance. Peace, furthermore, cannot be preserved merely by documentary acts that create political bodies and define their powers and duties. Such bodies can function effectively only as they can count upon public opinion to understand and support them. It is, therefore, indispensable that there exist an opportunity to bring the people of all the world to fuller knowledge of the facts and the greater acceptance of common moral standards. Spiritual and intellectual regimentation that prevents this is a basic underlying cause of war. As such it is not a matter of purely domestic concern, and governments and parties must recognize this if the world is to achieve a durable peace.

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